

VERTIGO

WILLINGHAM  
BUCKINGHAM  
LEIALOHA



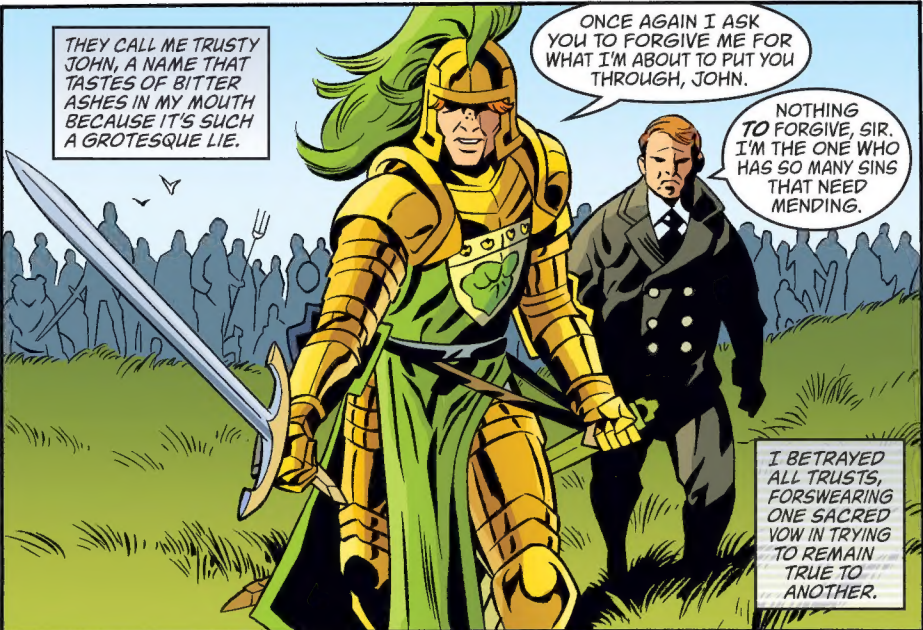
THE  
GOOD  
PRINCE

67

F  
A  
B  
L  
E  
S

Jan 08  
suggested for  
mature readers  
vertigo.comics.com





THEY CALL ME TRUSTY JOHN, A NAME THAT TASTES OF BITTER ASHES IN MY MOUTH BECAUSE IT'S SUCH A GROTESQUE LIE.

ONCE AGAIN I ASK YOU TO FORGIVE ME FOR WHAT I'M ABOUT TO PUT YOU THROUGH, JOHN.

NOTHING TO FORGIVE, SIR. I'M THE ONE WHO HAS SO MANY SINS THAT NEED MENDING.

I BETRAYED ALL TRUSTS, FORSWEARING ONE SACRED VOW IN TRYING TO REMAIN TRUE TO ANOTHER.

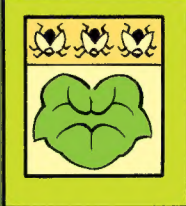


AND IN SO DOING, I SOLD OUT MY FRIENDS AND MY COUNTRY- IN-EXILE TO ITS ENEMIES.

PUT YOUR SWORD AWAY, CAPTAIN ZUM. WE'LL OBEY ALL OF THE HONORABLE CONVENTIONS OF PARLEY TODAY-- AS LONG AS THEY DO.

ENEMIES THAT EVEN NOW I'M MARCHING OUT TO FACE ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

# HAVEN



Bill Willingham writer - creator  
 Mark Buckingham penciller, inker  
 p. 9, 10, 19, 20

Steve Lee Todd  
 Leialoha Loughridge Klein  
 inker colors letters

In which a deadly battle is fought and a terrible killing occurs, but not necessarily in that order.

## Chapter Seven of The Good Prince

James Angela Shelly  
 Jean Rufino Bond  
 cover assistant editor editor





I DIED FOR MY TREASON, BUT WAS GIVEN THE SEMBLANCE OF NEW LIFE AGAIN BY MY OLD FRIEND FLYCATCHER, WHO'D SOMEHOW TRANSFORMED HIMSELF IN MY ABSENCE INTO THE MAGICALLY POWERFUL KING AMBROSE.

ALL VOWS, SACRED OR OTHERWISE, END WITH THE GRAVE. I WAS FINALLY FREE OF ALL PRIOR DUTIES WHEN AMBROSE ASKED ME TO ENTER INTO HIS SERVICE.

SO NOW I'M A NEW KING'S SQUIRE, UNDER THE CONSTRAINTS OF ONE LAST VOW THAT I WILL NEVER FOR-SWEAR. SECOND CHANCES MIGHT BE RARE IN LIFE, BUT IT SEEMS THEY ALSO OCCASIONALLY COME ALONG IN THE AFTERLIFE.

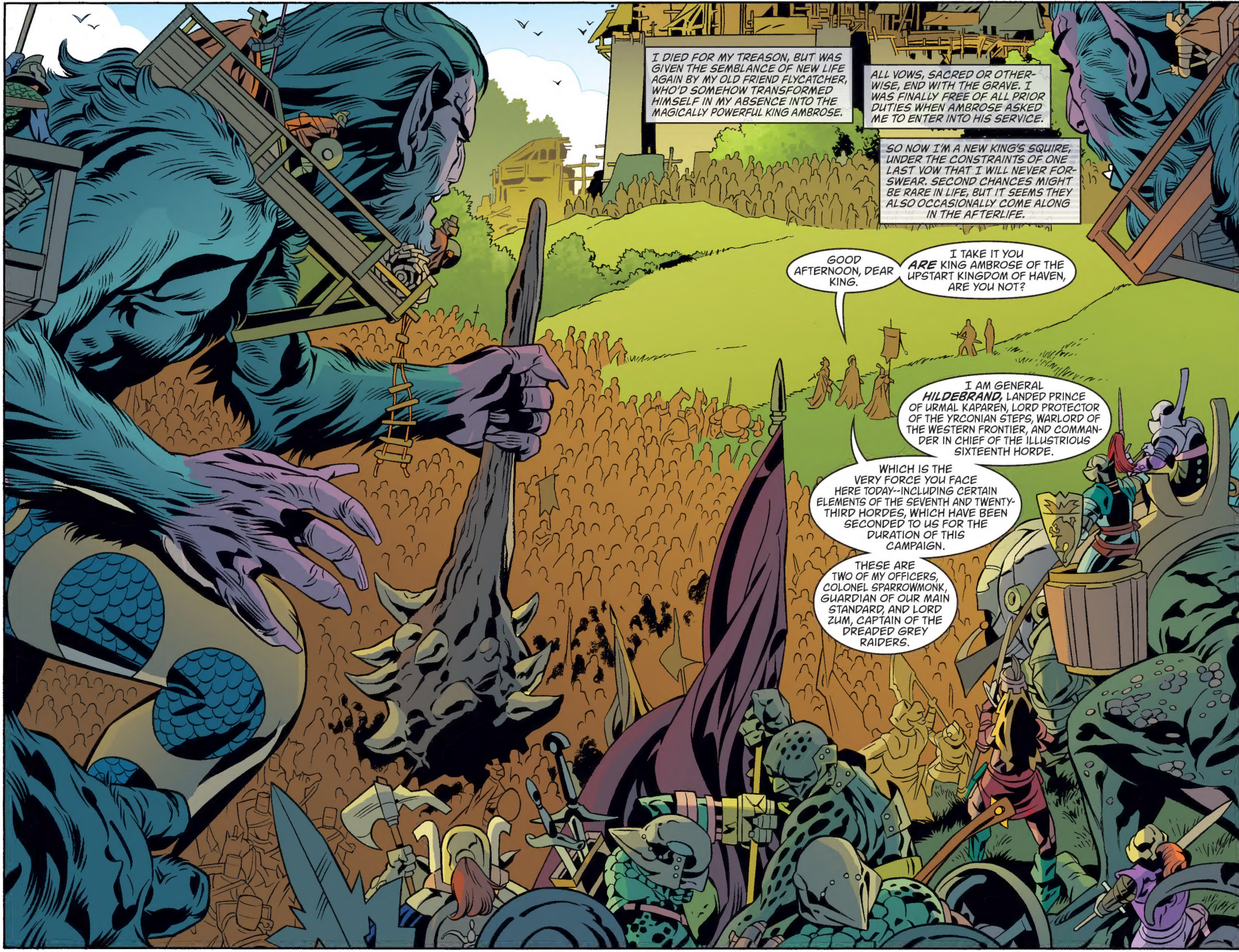
GOOD AFTERNOON, DEAR KING.

I TAKE IT YOU ARE KING AMBROSE OF THE UPSTART KINGDOM OF HAVEN, ARE YOU NOT?

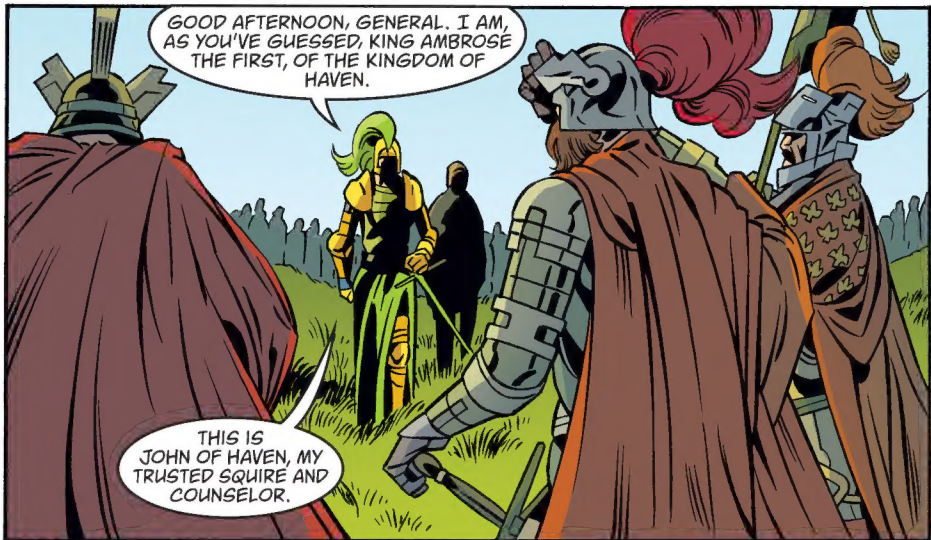
I AM GENERAL HILDEBRAND, LANDED PRINCE OF URMAL KAPAREN, LORD PROTECTOR OF THE YRCONIAN STEPS, WARLORD OF THE WESTERN FRONTIER, AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS SIXTEENTH HORDE.

WHICH IS THE VERY FORCE YOU FACE HERE TODAY--INCLUDING CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE SEVENTH AND TWENTY-THIRD HORDES, WHICH HAVE BEEN SECONDED TO US FOR THE DURATION OF THIS CAMPAIGN.

THESE ARE TWO OF MY OFFICERS, COLONEL SPARROWMONK, GUARDIAN OF OUR MAIN STANDARD, AND LORD ZUM, CAPTAIN OF THE DREADED GREY RAIDERS.







GOOD AFTERNOON, GENERAL. I AM, AS YOU'VE GUESSED, KING AMBROSE THE FIRST, OF THE KINGDOM OF HAVEN.

THIS IS JOHN OF HAVEN, MY TRUSTED SQUIRE AND COUNSELOR.



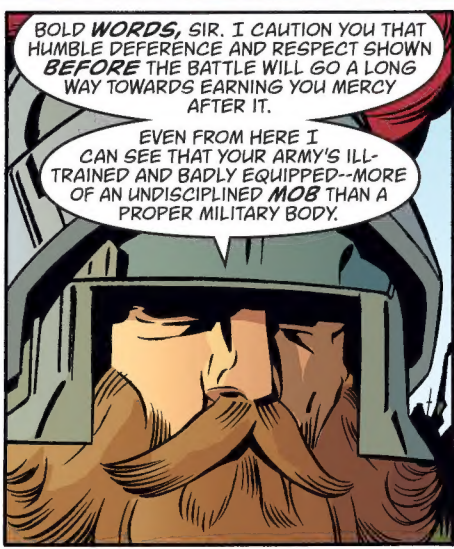
I SEE THAT YOU BRING NO STANDARD OF YOUR OWN ONTO THE FIELD, KING AMBROSE.

ARE YOU UNAWARE THAT IT'S A LONGSTANDING TRADITION OF HONORABLE WARFARE TO FIRST PRESENT **EVIDENCE** OF YOUR ARMY'S PREVIOUS VICTORIES?



I DEEPLY APOLOGIZE FOR MY OVERSIGHT, GENERAL, BUT MY ARMY'S A NEW ONE AND WE'VE NO STANDARDS, BECAUSE WE'VE NO PREVIOUS **VICTORIES** TO TRUMPET.

PERHAPS AFTER WE DEFEAT YOU TODAY, WE'LL TAKE STEPS TO **RECTIFY** THAT.



**BOLD WORDS**, SIR. I CAUTION YOU THAT HUMBLE DEFERENCE AND RESPECT SHOWN **BEFORE** THE BATTLE WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS EARNING YOU MERCY AFTER IT.

EVEN FROM HERE I CAN SEE THAT YOUR ARMY'S ILL-TRAINED AND BADLY EQUIPPED--MORE OF AN UNDISCIPLINED **MOB** THAN A PROPER MILITARY BODY.







WHEREAS MY ARMY IS HIGHLY TRAINED AND WELL-TEMPERED IN THE FIRES OF *MANY* MARTIAL CAMPAIGNS-- ALL OF WHICH WE'VE *WON*, I MIGHT ADD.

IF YOU'RE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO CHOOSE *BATTLE*, RATHER THAN IMMEDIATE SURRENDER, THE OUTCOME OF TODAY'S ACTIONS IS ALREADY WRITTEN.

DO YOU THINK SO, GENERAL HILDEBRAND? WILL YOU INDULGE ME IN ONE THING THEN, EVEN THOUGH IT MAY SEEM A GROSS VIOLATION OF OUR TEMPORARY *TRUCE* HERE?

WILL YOU HAVE YOUR OVEREAGER CAPTAIN ZUM PUT MY MAN JOHN TO THE SWORD?

RIGHT NOW? GO ON AND STRIKE HIM DOWN, AS A PERSONAL FAVOR TO ME.



PLEASE DO. I WON'T RESIST. NOR WILL ANYONE IN OUR LINES ACT IN RETALIATION.

VERY WELL, THOUGH I NOW SUSPECT *BOTH* OF YOU OF MADNESS.

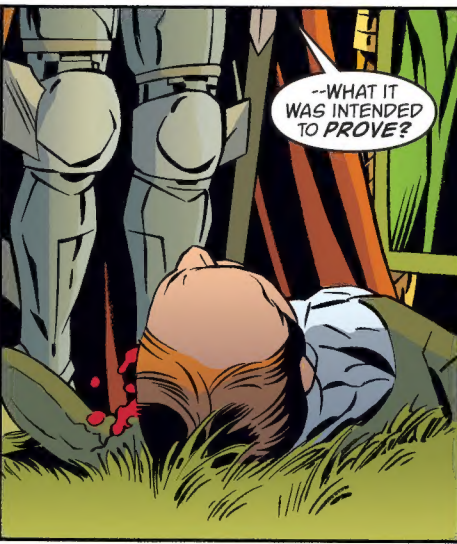
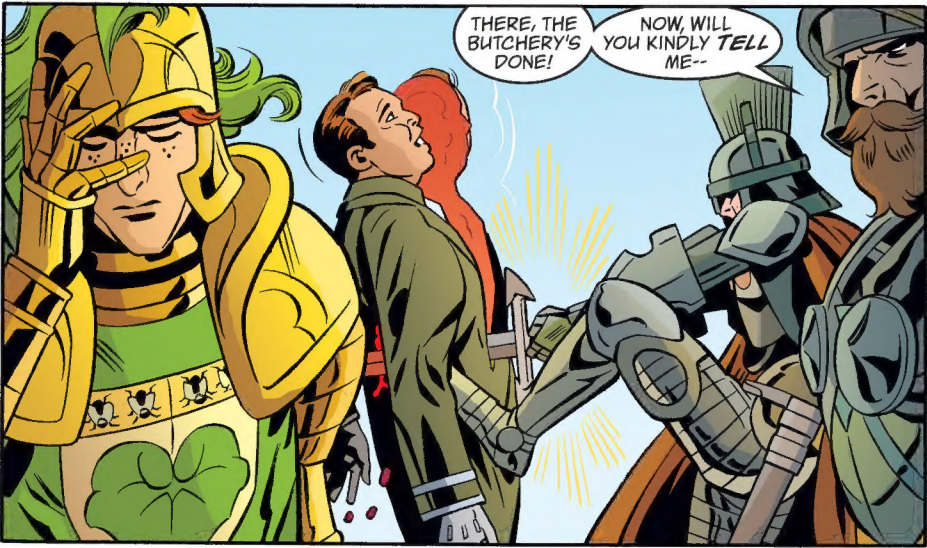
CAPTAIN ZUM?



GLADLY, M'LORD.











AND NOW BEHOLD, I LET THE CARCASS ON THE GROUND FADE BACK TO THE NOTHING IT ALWAYS WAS, WHILE GRANTING **NEW SOLID FLESH** TO MY SQUIRE JOHN.

ZOUNDS.



AND HERE REVEALED IS WHY YOUR ARMY CAN NEVER HOPE TO **DEFEAT** MINE. ALL OF MY HOST IS MADE UP OF GHOSTS-GIVEN-FORM LIKE JOHN HERE.

KILL THEM IN THE THOUSANDS AND I WILL RESTORE THEM **INSTANTLY** BACK TO LIFE. KILL THEM AGAIN AND I WILL RESTORE THEM AGAIN-- AND AGAIN AND AGAIN, WITHOUT CEASE.



IN THE MEANTIME THEY'LL WHITTLE AWAY AT YOUR ALL-TOO-MORTAL TROOPS, **SLOWLY** PERHAPS AND INEFFECTUALLY AT FIRST, BUT STEADILY, AS SURELY AS THE SUN RISES AND SETS, AND RISES AGAIN.



THOUGH IT TAKE DAYS, OR WEEKS, OR **MONTHS** TO FINISH THE GRIM WORK, WE'LL EVENTUALLY AND INEVITABLY DESTROY YOUR ARMY COMPLETELY.



THIS IS--THIS IS-- I HAVE MY **OWN** SORCERERS WHO CAN--

DO YOU THINK SO?

GO AMONG YOUR MILITARY WARLOCKS AND SEE IF A **ONE** OF THEM CAN STILL CAST THE MEREST SPELL OR CANTRIP.





IN MY KINGDOM NO MAGIC CAN WORK BUT MINE. LEAVE THE FIELD, GENERAL. YOU'RE ALREADY DEFEATED.

SO THE ONLY HONORABLE COURSE LEFT TO YOU IS TO PRESERVE THE LIVES OF YOUR MEN.

BUT I CAN'T!



THE EMPEROR WOULD HAVE MY HEAD IF I SURRENDERED BEFORE ANY BATTLE WAS ACTUALLY FOUGHT--AND THE HEADS OF ALL MY OFFICERS, TOO.

I SUSPECTED AS MUCH, SO ALLOW ME TO OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE TO SO MUCH NEEDLESS SLAUGHTER. I PROPOSE A COMBAT OF CHAMPIONS.



I'LL REPRESENT MY SIDE. AND IF I WIN, YOU AND ALL OF YOUR FORCES WILL DEPART MY LANDS, NEVER TO RETURN.

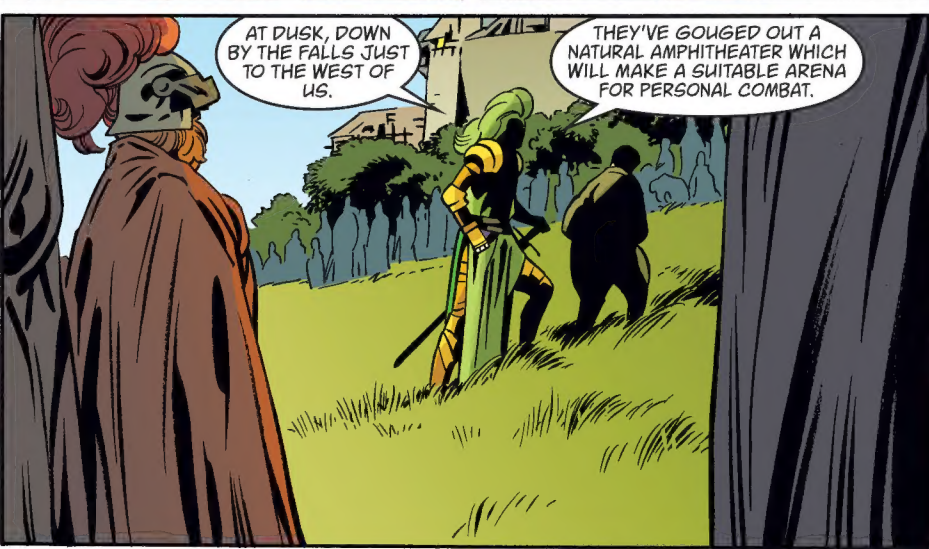
BUT IF YOUR CHAMPION BEATS ME, WE WILL SURRENDER OURSELVES INTO YOUR HANDS, TO DO WITH AS YOU SEE FIT.



AND OF COURSE YOU CAN PICK WHOMEVER YOU WISH TO REPRESENT YOUR SIDE.

THESE TERMS ARE ACCEPTABLE.

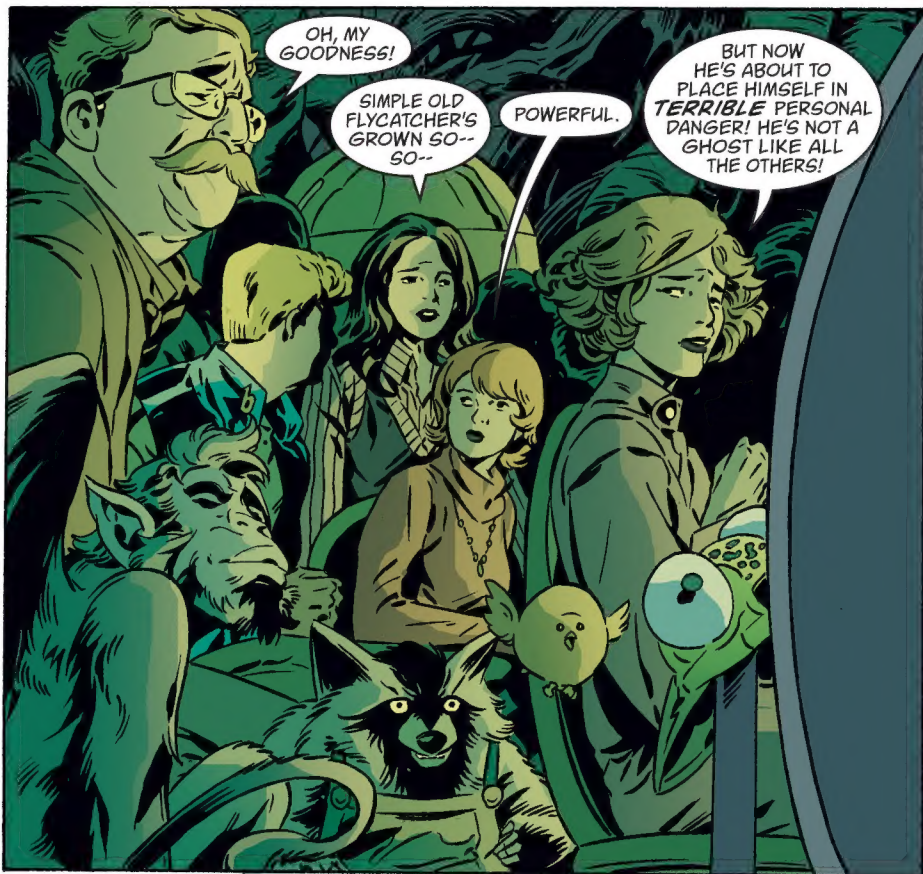
WHERE AND WHEN SHALL WE MEET?



AT DUSK, DOWN BY THE FALLS JUST TO THE WEST OF US.

THEY'VE GOUGED OUT A NATURAL AMPHITHEATER WHICH WILL MAKE A SUITABLE ARENA FOR PERSONAL COMBAT.



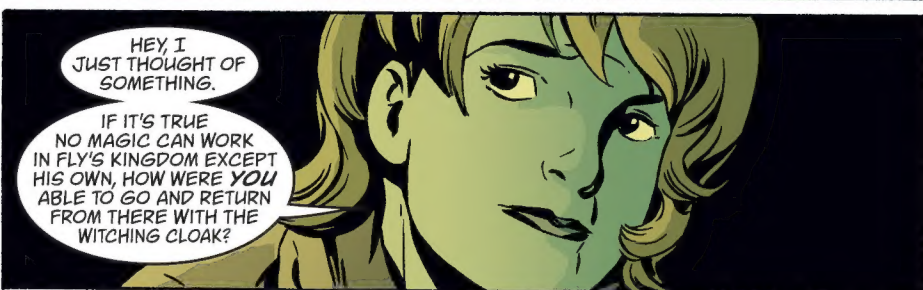


OH, MY GOODNESS!

SIMPLE OLD FLYCATCHER'S GROWN SO-- SO--

POWERFUL.

BUT NOW HE'S ABOUT TO PLACE HIMSELF IN **TERRIBLE** PERSONAL DANGER! HE'S NOT A GHOST LIKE ALL THE OTHERS!



HEY, I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING.

IF IT'S TRUE NO MAGIC CAN WORK IN FLY'S KINGDOM EXCEPT HIS OWN, HOW WERE **YOU** ABLE TO GO AND RETURN FROM THERE WITH THE WITCHING CLOAK?



I ASKED FLY THAT VERY THING ON MY LAST TRIP. HE SAID HE **ALLOWED** THE CLOAK TO WORK.

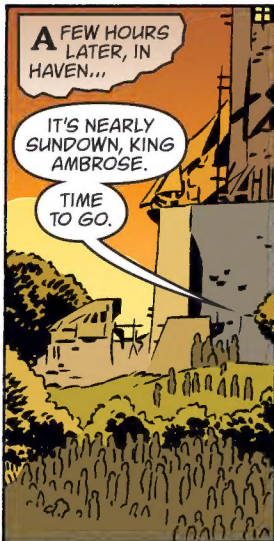
AND THEN HE DID SOMETHING ODD. HE FELT ITS HEM AND SAID SOMETHING LIKE, "HMMM, THAT'S GOOD MAGIC. I THINK I'LL **BORROW** IT."



AT FIRST I THOUGHT HE WANTED TO BORROW THE WITCHING CLOAK, BUT HE NEVER DID.

NOW I WONDER IF HE DIDN'T MEAN SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.





A FEW HOURS LATER, IN HAVEN...

IT'S NEARLY SUNDOWN, KING AMBROSE.

TIME TO GO.



I HAVE TO CONFESS, I'M **SCARED**, LANCE. I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY FOUGHT ANY--

DON'T WORRY, SIR. AS LONG AS YOU WEAR THAT ARMOR AND CARRY EXCALIBUR, YOU'LL BE **INVINCIBLE** IN BATTLE.



PROVIDED YOUR CAUSE IS JUST, AND IN THIS CASE IT MOST CERTAINLY IS.

WERE YOU EVER SCARED BEFORE BATTLE, LANCE?

NOT REALLY, BUT I WAS ALWAYS AN ODD DUCK, EVEN FOR THOSE VIOLENT TIMES. EVERY SANE PERSON IS. TRUST ME, YOU'LL DO **FINE**.



WE'D BETTER GO. BEST NOT TO BE LATE.

YOU CAN STAY, JOHN. I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE. YOU'VE ALREADY DONE MORE THAN YOUR PART.



IT DIDN'T ACTUALLY HURT ALL THAT **MUCH**, SIR. IT HAPPENED SO QUICK THAT--

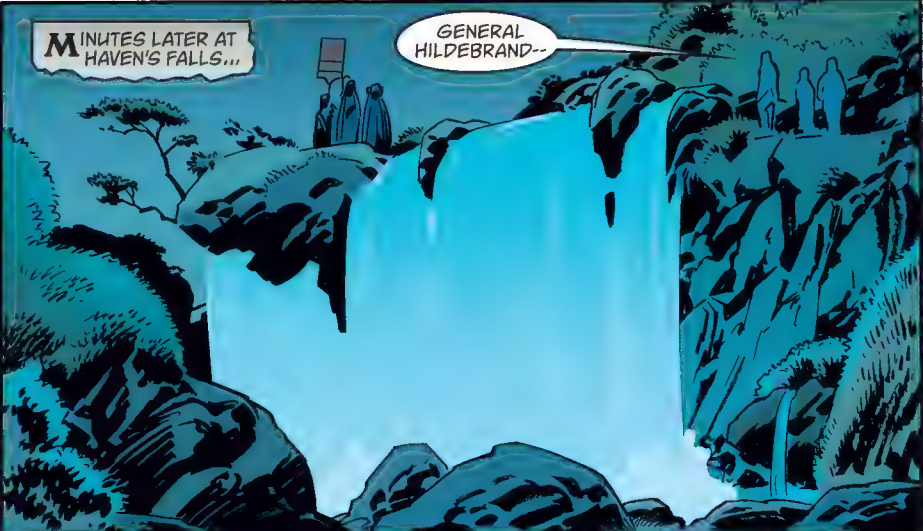
IN ANY CASE, MY PLACE IS BY YOUR SIDE, SO THAT'S WHERE I'LL BE.





MINUTES LATER AT HAVEN'S FALLS...

GENERAL HILDEBRAND--



--AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE DOWN BELOW, FACING OUR KING?

YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT MILITARY CUSTOMS AND TACTICS, BOY. GENERALS ADMINISTER BATTLES. IT'S THE COMMON RANKERS WHO MIX IT UP IN THE MELEE.



I NEVER SAID I'D BE THE SIXTEENTH HORDE'S CHAMPION TODAY. THAT HONOR GOES TO THE DEADLIEST FIGHTER IN MY RANKS--A TROLL NAMED GRINDER.



HE'S WAITING BELOW, AS ARRANGED.



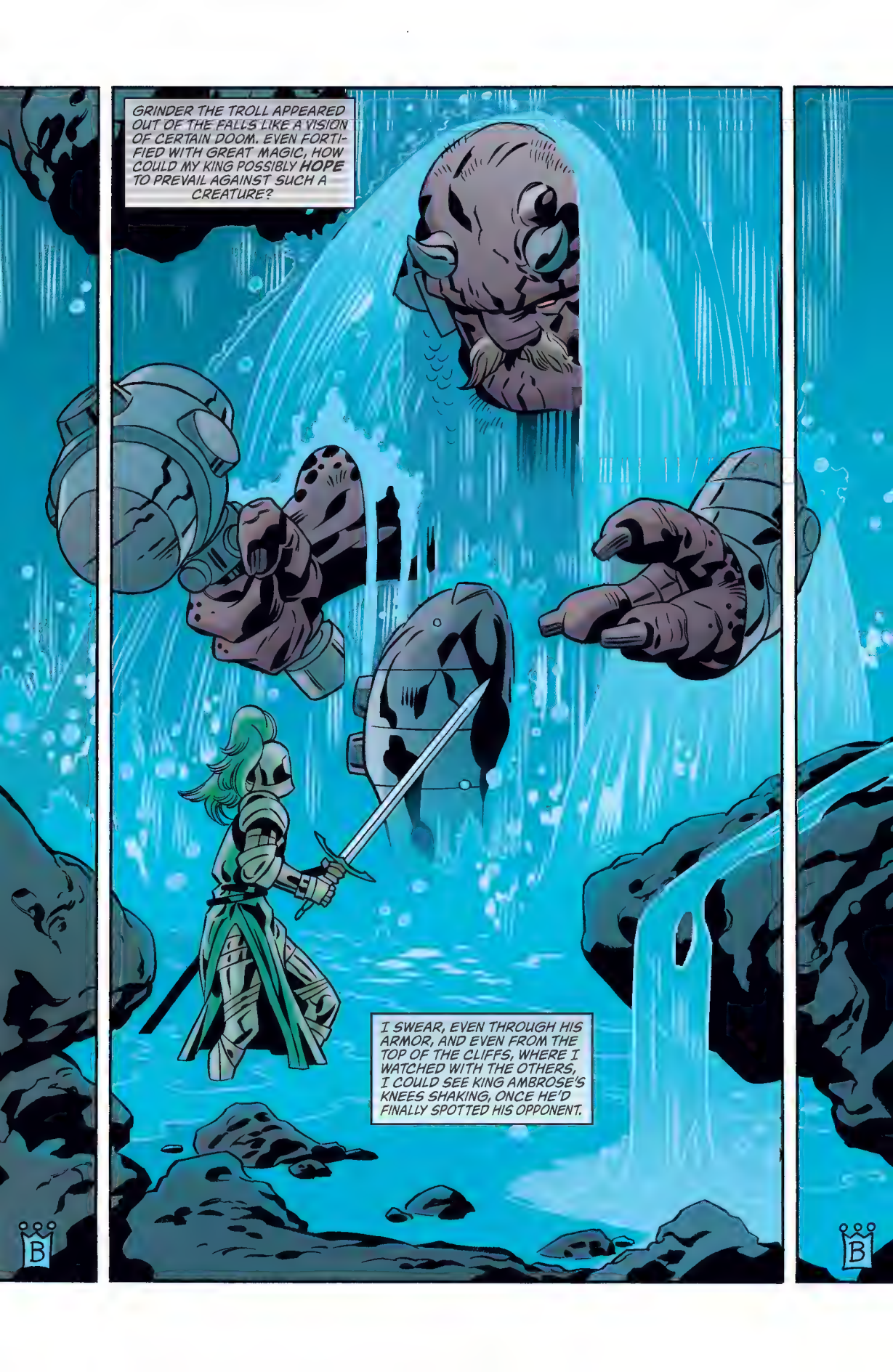
OKAY, I'M HERE, AS PROMISED. WHERE'S MY OPPONENT?



OH, MY...







GRINDER THE TROLL APPEARED OUT OF THE FALLS LIKE A VISION OF CERTAIN DOOM. EVEN FORTIFIED WITH GREAT MAGIC, HOW COULD MY KING POSSIBLY HOPE TO PREVAIL AGAINST SUCH A CREATURE?

I SWEAR, EVEN THROUGH HIS ARMOR, AND EVEN FROM THE TOP OF THE CLIFFS, WHERE I WATCHED WITH THE OTHERS, I COULD SEE KING AMBROSE'S KNEES SHAKING, ONCE HE'D FINALLY SPOTTED HIS OPPONENT.





AND THEN  
SUDDENLY  
THE BATTLE  
WAS JOINED.



AND OUR  
UNTRIED KING  
EASED ALL  
OUR FEARS  
BY STRIKING  
FIRST AND  
OFTEN.



HE RAINED  
BLOW  
AFTER BLOW  
ON THE  
ENEMY'S  
CHAMPION.

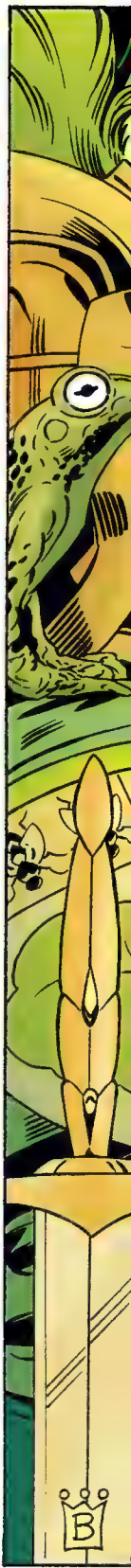
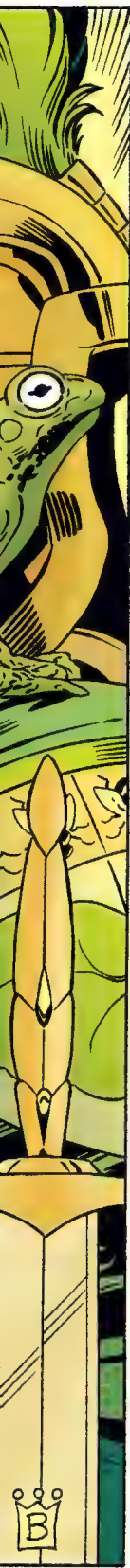


WHAT IS HE  
DOING?

HE'S ONLY  
USING THE FLAT  
OF HIS BLADE!

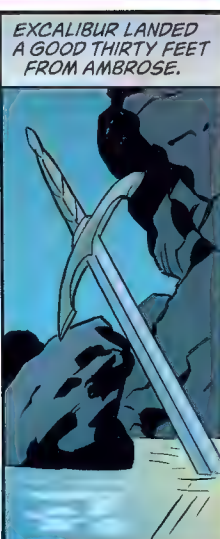
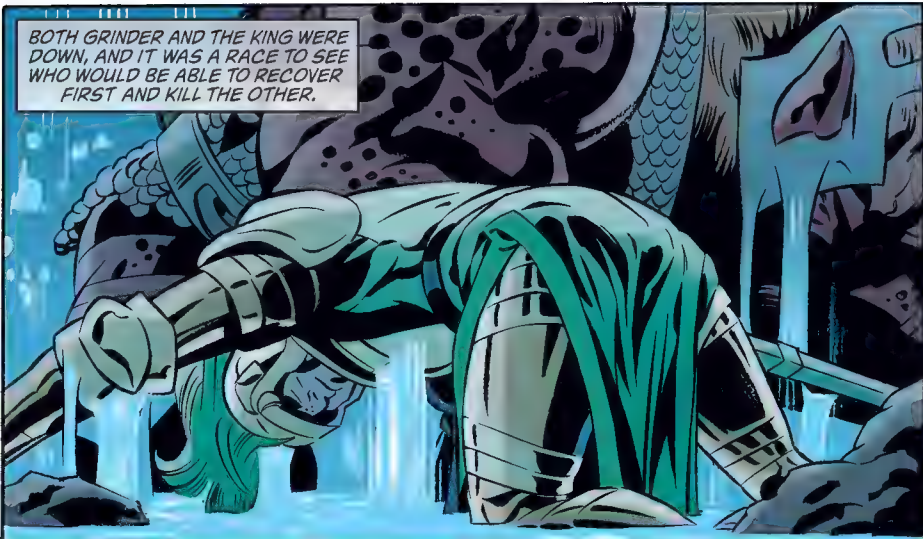
IS HE  
SUICIDAL?  
HE'S GOING TO RUIN  
IT FOR ALL OF  
US!



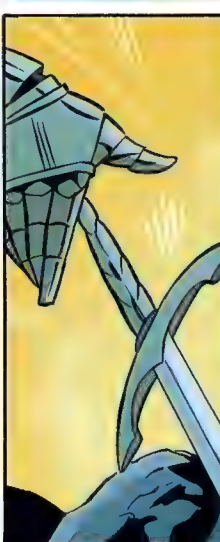
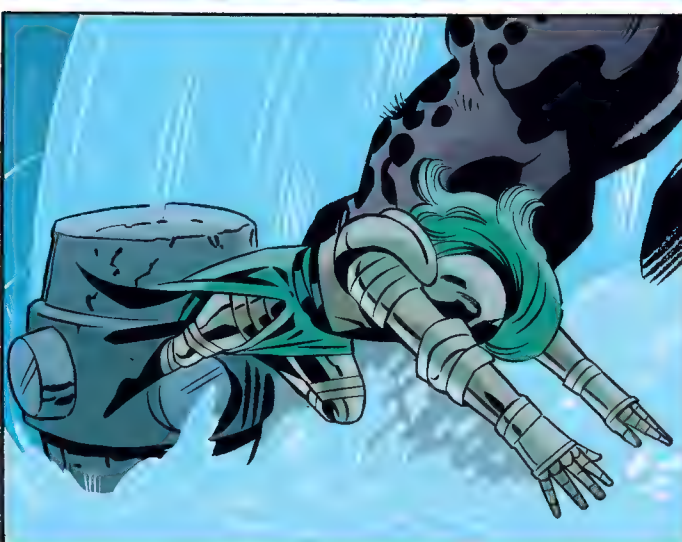




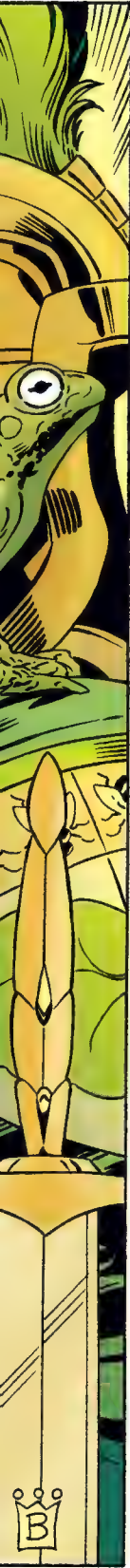
BOTH GRINDER AND THE KING WERE DOWN, AND IT WAS A RACE TO SEE WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO RECOVER FIRST AND KILL THE OTHER.



EXCALIBUR LANDED A GOOD THIRTY FEET FROM AMBROSE.



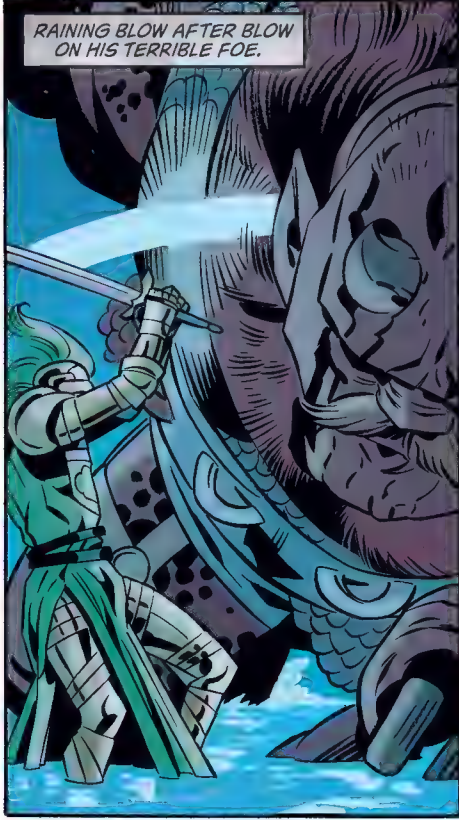




I THINK FLY--I MEAN KING AMBROSE--I THINK HE HAD LEARNED HOW TO USE HIS GREATER SPEED AND DEXTERITY BY THEN.



MEANING HE LEARNED THE DEADLY CONSEQUENCES OF GETTING HIT, AND RESOLVED NOT TO LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN. HE MOVED CONSTANTLY FROM THAT POINT ON.



RAINING BLOW AFTER BLOW ON HIS TERRIBLE FOE.

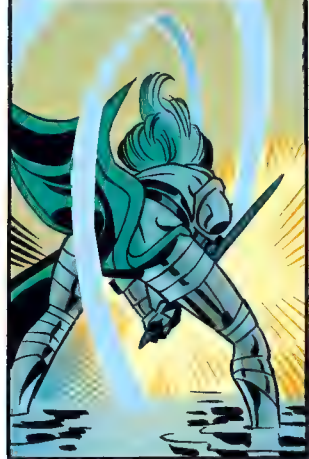




AGAIN AND AGAIN AMBROSE STRUCK, AND EACH TIME THE TROLL WEAKENED A BIT MORE.



THIS WENT ON FOR A TERRIBLE LONG TIME.



BUT FINALLY THE GREAT BATTLE TROLL WAS BEATEN INTO SUBMISSION.

I-I YIELD TO YOU, GREAT KING.

SLAY ME QUICKLY, PLEASE.



IF I'D INTENDED TO KILL YOU, I WOULD'VE USED THE SHARP EDGE OF MY BLADE. RISE, TROLL, AND GO ON YOUR WAY. I'VE DEFEATED YOU AND THAT'S ENOUGH.

WHY BOTHER? THEY'LL KILL ME ANYWAY WHEN I RETURN TO MY RANKS.

BETTER THAT YOU DO IT. FAILURE IS REWARDED WITH DEATH IN THE EMPIRE'S ARMY.



THAT'S A SILLY AND WASTEFUL POLICY. SINCE YOU'RE NO LONGER WELCOME THEN IN THE EMPIRE, WHY NOT STAY HERE AS A MOST WELCOME SUBJECT IN MY KINGDOM?

YOU FOUGHT BRAVELY AND WELL, GRINDER, AND ONLY LOST DUE TO THE GREAT POWERS AIDING ME--NOT EXACTLY FAIR, BUT THIS IS WAR, AFTER ALL.

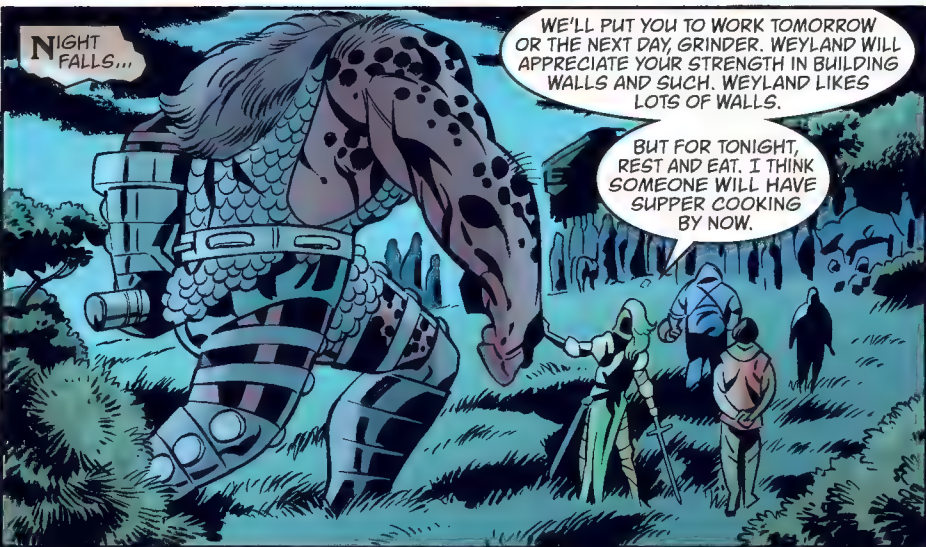


IN ANY CASE, I'D BE PROUD TO HAVE YOU IN MY SERVICE.

WHAT'S HE DOING? WE NEVER DISCUSSED THIS! WE DIDN'T PLAN THINGS THIS WAY!











THIS SEEMS PRIVATE ENOUGH. WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, LANCE?

SIR, ARE YOU-- I MEAN TO SAY, HAVE YOU--?



HAVE YOU LOST YOUR BLOODY MIND?

LANCE? WHAT'S WRONG?

WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY ONLY USING THE *FLAT* OF YOUR BLADE? YOU COULD HAVE BEEN *KILLED* OUT THERE!



I THOUGHT I WAS INVINCIBLE IN BATTLE.



ONLY IF YOU FIGHT THE WAY YOU'RE *MEANT* TO! A *SWORD* IS SUPPOSED TO BE *USED* AS A *SWORD*--NOT A *PADDLE* TO DISCIPLINE SOME *WAYWARD CHILD*!



I TOLD YOU BEFORE, I'M DETERMINED TO FIND A WAY TO DO THIS WITHOUT BLOODSHED.



I THOUGHT YOU MEANT WITHOUT *OUR* BLOODSHED! IT'S PERFECTLY WITHIN A WARRIOR'S RIGHTS TO SPILL *ENEMY* BLOOD! THAT'S THE WAY OF MORAL WAR! YOU CAN'T DISHONOR YOURSELF THAT WAY!



THIS IS *YOUR* QUEST, TRUE. IT'S YOUR SACRED MISSION TO FULFILL. BUT *MY* REDEMPTION'S ALSO ON THE LINE! IT'S MY ONE SHOT IN UNTOLD CENTURIES AND IT'S *ENTIRELY* IN YOUR HANDS NOW!


AND IF YOU TAKE FOOLISH RISKS WITH MY CHANCE AT A NEWLY CLEAN ETERNITY--





SETTLE DOWN, LANCE. YOUR REDEMPTION'S STILL ON COURSE. AND I WON'T BE PUTTING MYSELF AT DIRECT RISK ANYMORE.

I HAD TO DO IT ONCE TO **SHOW** THESE PEOPLE WHO'VE PLACED THEIR TRUST AND THEIR FUTURE IN MY HANDS THAT I'M WILLING TO FIGHT AND RISK MY **LIFE** FOR THEM.

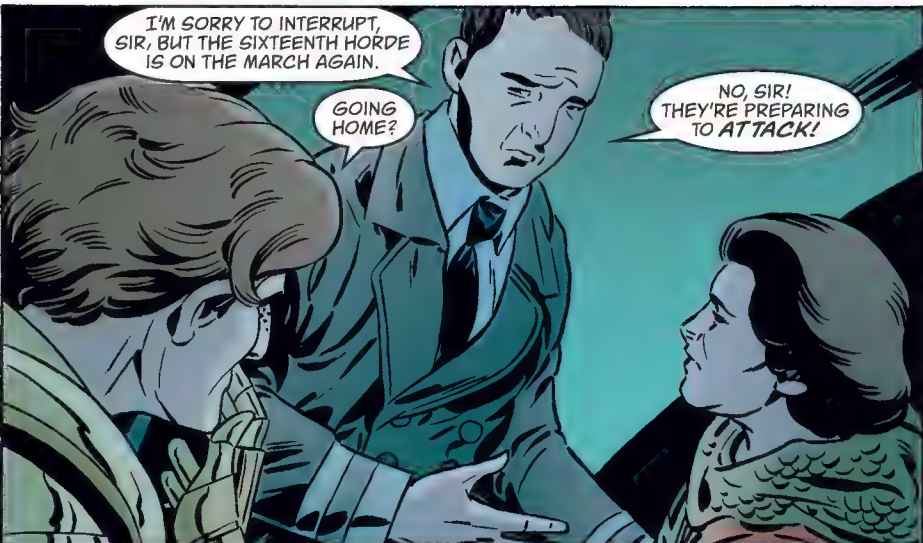


AND TO SUFFER DIRE WOUNDS IN THEIR CAUSE-- WHICH WORKED ALL TOO WELL, BECAUSE I FEAR GRINDER BROKE AT THE VERY LEAST A FEW OF MY RIBS TODAY.



BUT NOW WE CAN MOVE ON TO--

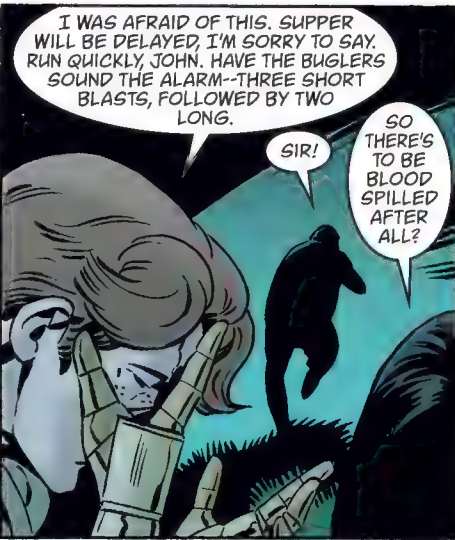
KING AMBROSE!



I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT, SIR, BUT THE SIXTEENTH HORDE IS ON THE MARCH AGAIN.

GOING HOME?

NO, SIR! THEY'RE PREPARING TO **ATTACK!**



I WAS AFRAID OF THIS. SUPPER WILL BE DELAYED, I'M SORRY TO SAY. RUN QUICKLY, JOHN. HAVE THE BUGLERS SOUND THE ALARM--THREE SHORT BLASTS, FOLLOWED BY TWO LONG.

SIR!

SO THERE'S TO BE BLOOD SPILLED AFTER ALL?



NOT NECESSARILY. THAT'S THE SIGNAL FOR A SPECIAL ATTACK I BRIEFED OUR PEOPLE ON EARLIER TODAY.

BEFORE RESORTING TO THE TYPE OF BATTLE I WARNED HILDEBRAND ABOUT, I HAVE ONE MORE TRICK I WANT TO TRY FIRST--LETTING THE GHOSTS **ACT** LIKE GHOSTS.





TIME TO RELEASE THEM FROM THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE FLESH, FOR A TIME.



THEY'RE GHOSTS IN TRUTH AND I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF MOST ARE STILL FRIGHTENED OF SPOOKS IN THE NIGHT.







LOOK, SIR!  
WHAT'S THAT DARK  
CLOUD COMING  
TOWARDS US?

FRIGHT-  
ENING,  
HARROWING,  
*S*OU-  
L-  
RENDING...



...WHAT  
MORTAL  
ARMY IS  
TRAINED TO  
*S*TAND  
AGAINST  
SUCH  
THINGS?



NEXT: ALL-OUT WAR!



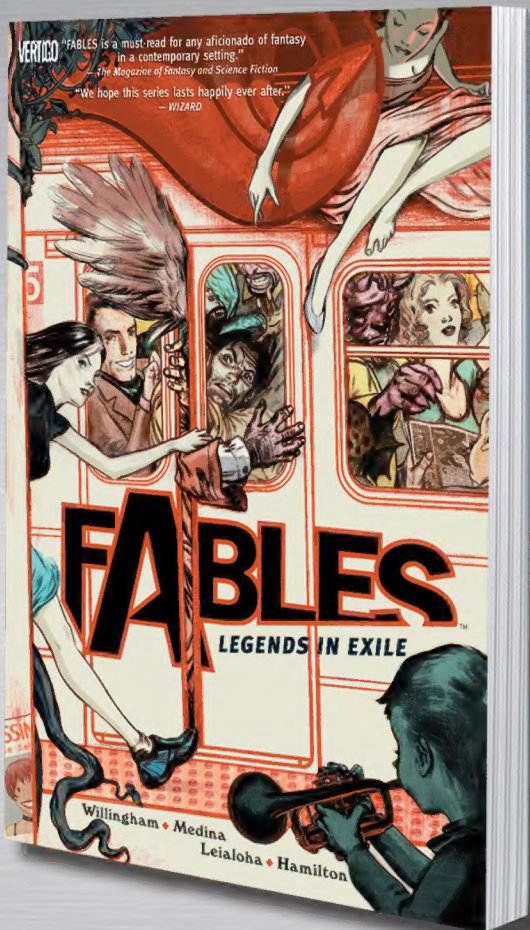
"FABLES is an excellent series in the tradition of SANDMAN, one that rewards careful attention and loyalty." – ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

# BILL WILLINGHAM

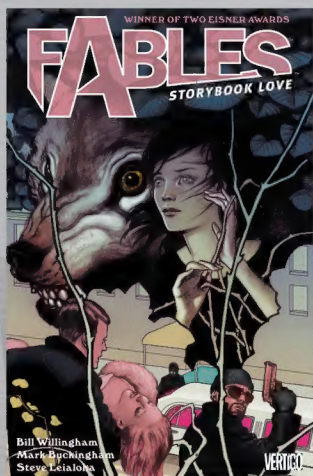
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."  
– THE WASHINGTON POST



- VOL. 1: LEGENDS IN EXILE
- VOL. 2: ANIMAL FARM
- VOL. 3: STORYBOOK LOVE
- VOL. 4: MARCH OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS
- VOL. 5: THE MEAN SEASONS
- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
- VOL. 8: WOLVES
- VOL. 9: SONS OF EMPIRE
- VOL. 10: THE GOOD PRINCE
- VOL. 11: WAR AND PIECES
- VOL. 12: THE DARK AGES
- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



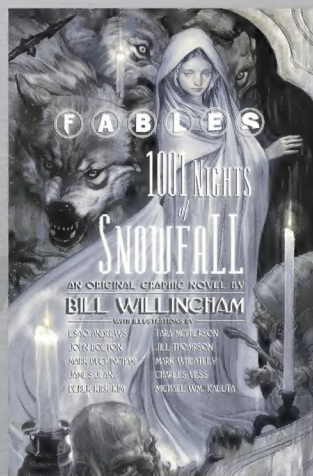
FABLES VOL. 3:  
STORYBOOK LOVE



FABLES VOL. 6:  
HOMELANDS



FABLES:  
1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



Use the **BUY IN PRINT** feature to find a comics shop near you.  
Check back here every week for **NEW DIGITAL RELEASES!**

Suggested for Mature Readers





NATHAN